

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Publications

Civil Rights Archive

1-1-1900

Activities of A. E. Cox of the Delta Foundation and some of his Associates

Author Unknown

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/civ_pubs



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Unknown, Author, "Activities of A. E. Cox of the Delta Foundation and some of his Associates" (1900). *Publications*. 5.

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/civ_pubs/5

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Civil Rights Archive at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

ACTIVITIES OF A. E. COX OF THE DELTA FOUNDATION AND SOME OF HIS ASSOCIATES

In 1936 Sherwood Eddy, Reinhold Niebuhr, Bishop William Carroll, Samuel H. Franklin, John Rust and William Amberson bought a tract of land near Hildesheim in Bolivar County, Mississippi for \$17,000.00 and established a settlement known as Rochdale Cooperative Farms. Since Rockefeller was a generous contributor to Eddy's project, we wonder if that is not why this farm was named Rochdale. This settlement was composed of white and Negro tenant farmers. According to a statement Eddy made in his autobiography, Cox was an agent of this corporation.

In 1939, this group purchased Providence Plantation in Holmes County. This project operated under the title of Providence Cooperative Farms, owned by the Delta Foundation.

On this farm, which Eddy said was in an area where "tenancy and peonage was at its worst", a colony of white and colored tenant farmers were located for the purpose of promoting racial integration.

A. E. Cox and Dr. David R. Minter were in charge of this operation. Dr. Minter set up a medical clinic and A. E. Cox was business director of the project.

For quite some time little notice was given to this settlement, but as time went on it became evident that something unusual and contrary to the best interests of both the white and colored races was taking place in this colony. Negroes were seen in swimming with white children, and it was then found that white and Negro families attended the same church together and visited in each other's homes.

After the unusual happenings at Providence commanded the attention of the people of Holmes County, it became evident that other individuals were participating in activities taking place there. Among them were Will D. Campbell, who at that time was on the Payroll of the University of Mississippi, as Director of Religious Life, and Mrs. Hazel Brannon Smith, at that time editor of the Lexington Advertiser and Democrat News, but who is now publishing the Flora Banner, the Northside Reporter, and the Negro Free Press, which is a vicious, trouble-making sheet agitating for complete racial integration. Other known participants were two Negro integration leaders, Dr. Felix Dunn and Dr. Gilbert Mason, who have been trouble-makers on the Mississippi Coast and were prominent in the Biloxi beach integration incidents.

Each of these four individuals have played leading roles in the Communist promoted racial integration issues in the state and elsewhere.

Will D. Campbell is now employed by the National Council of Churches. He wrote instructions for the sit-in campaigns which have upset the nation and have cost the states millions of dollars and incited no end of racial strife. He traveled over the country soliciting support and assisting in organizing these sit-ins.

From instructions sent out to officials of "United Church Women" from their New York headquarters, the following is quoted:

"United Church Women
475 Riverside Drive
New York 27, New York

October, 1960

"How we wish it had been possible during the months since the sit-in movement began to have talked with those of you in key positions in United Church Women and in your community so that our total United Church Women movement could profit from your thinking and experience. We are grateful, however, that this could happen at least in part, through the Board of Managers Meeting in April.

"I am writing you today as president of your local council, together with other presidents in cities where sit-in demonstrations have occurred, to share with you what has been done nationally, and to send you material which we hope will prove useful as you face the question of what you as an individual leader, or as one of a group in the council, feel you can do in the coming weeks to help bring about a just and equitable solution in your community.

"Because situations are changing so rapidly, it may be that your city has already reached an adequate answer, and that this has occurred since the list of cities was revised. If this is the case we should be so glad to have you write us, giving any experience which could be valuable for other communities.

"Nationally, as you may well know, the Christian Social Relations Advisory Committee contacted all its state chairmen in the spring, expressing support of the non-violent protest to effect desegregation at lunch counters and suggested practical steps which might be taken nationally and locally. Since that time resolutions have been adopted by the Board of Managers of United Church Women at its annual meeting in April and more recently by the National Council of Churches. Copies of these statements are enclosed.

"We have tried to act nationally on the recommendations made to us. We wrote to the headquarters of the Woolworth and Kress Companies and have also had a long interview with Kress Vice President in charge of public relations. We have had consultations with other Divisions and Units of the National Council of Churches and with related organizations such as the Y.W.C.A. Our experience resulted in the conviction that the key to any effective solution lies not with bodies or individuals outside but with the concerned people in each local community. Those close to the whole situation say that desegregation has not occurred in any city except with the help of a local committee which has the respect of both sides enough to make communication possible and to effect a reconciliation of views culminating in an acceptable formula for a just solution. This has led us to feel that the most useful service United Church Women nationally could render would be to share with the local presidents that conviction and provide material about the nature and methods of citizens' committees in cities where desegregation has occurred.

"We are therefore enclosing two brief materials prepared especially for the United Church Women.

"Committees Playing a Supportive Role in the Sit-In Movement", prepared by Rev. Will D. Campbell, Associate Executive Director, Department of Racial and Cultural Relations, National Council of Churches

"Very often individuals within United Church Women, because of their conviction, experience and the respect in which they are held, are in a position to provide strong support for, or where necessary initiate, something such as a citizen's committee, either directly themselves or through some appropriate person or persons in the community.

"If your city should be at a point where it would be valuable to rely upon the experience of a person rather than material alone, you might want to contact Rev. Will D. Campbell, 1716 West End Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee. Mr. Campbell, a native of Mississippi, whose professional responsibility as a National Council of Churches staff member is to give help in the area of human relations, has had a great deal of valuable experience, as the material he has prepared indicates. Within the limits of his travel schedule he would be glad to be of use to you.

"We shall share with you any further insights or information which may come to us.

Sincerely,
Margaret E. Kuhn
Chairman"

(This letter is not quoted in its entirety.)

Mrs. Hazel Brannon Smith has for years worked continuously with Negro agitators for integration. She has figured prominently in many trouble-making racial issues in Holmes County over a long period of time. She assisted in the recent Clarksdale "boycott". She has participated in meetings with officials of the NAACP and is known to maintain regular contact with Negro Medgar Evers, State Field Secretary of the NAACP.

The above mentioned are only a few of Mrs. Smith's many activities which have done much to arouse and stimulate dangerous tensions between the white and Negro races.

A news item under a Carbondale, Illinois dateline of July 20, 1960, stated that Mrs. Hazel Brannon Smith, editor of the Lexington Advertiser had won the Elijah Parish Lovejoy award and said:

"Mrs. Smith, publisher of several papers besides the Advertiser, has been the target of a group which opposes her news and editorial policies supporting integration."

It is a matter of public knowledge that Mrs. Smith's papers have been subsidized by hard core Communists such as Sydney Hollander of Baltimore, Maryland, and Communist Foundations. (See letter)

She was closely aligned with Dr. Minter and A. E. Cox on the Providence Farm and it is reliably reported that A. E. Cox still calls on her regularly.

Mrs. Smith came to Mississippi in 1936. Since that is the year the Sherwood Eddy group, with Cox and Minter, came to Mississippi, and since their mutual interest is promotion of racial integration, the question arises as to whether or not their arrival in Mississippi in the same year was coincidental.

Mrs. Smith gained notoriety as a racial agitator on the state and national level in 1954 when the Holmes County Sheriff shot a negro in the leg. She wrote numerous libelous articles about the sheriff and published them in the columns of her papers, and as a result the sheriff sued, and obtained a judgment against her.

The people of Holmes County had long been cognizant of Mrs. Smith's activities among the Negro population, but after this large scale attempt to stir up a racial issue was picked up by the press in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and over the nation, they became aware of the liberal and Communist element who aligned themselves with her.

Among the Communist and pro-Communist organizations and people who have backed and subsidized Mrs. Smith's racial activities are the following:

The Edith Lauer Fund, the Fund For the Republic, Southern Regional Council, and members of the National Citizens Political Action Committee such as Sydney Hollander, Nelson Poynter, and James Dombrowski. Ralph McGill, H. N. Heiskell, Mark Ethridge, Francis Harmon, and Hodding Carter have been identified with her activities.

Hodding Carter, who has worked for racial integration on the national and international front has worked closely with Mrs. Smith. He recommended her for an award from the Fund For the Republic for defending "Civil Liberties". She was awarded \$500.00 and Hodding Carter collected it and turned it over to her.

Mrs. Smith is known to have worked with CORE and NAACP in the racial strife which has swept the state during the past year, causing fearful damage to the heretofore generally harmonious race relations and forcing a terrific expenditure of state and municipal funds.

In 1955, the "Social Experiment" in racial integration being conducted by A. E. Cox and Dr. David Minter on Providence Plantation erupted into a sensational incident when a white girl on a roadside awaiting a school bus was accosted by four Negro youths, one of whom made obscene suggestions to her. A few minutes later a lady who lived in the county drove by and picked the girl up to give her a ride to her school in nearby Tchula. This lady immediately noticed that the girl was emotionally upset and inquired as to the reason. Upon being told, she drove straight to the school and reported the incident to the school superintendent who in turn called the Sheriff and the Negroes were soon taken into custody for questioning.

The girl's parents lived on the Providence settlement, and when A. E. Cox heard that the Negroes were being held he went to the Sheriff and tried to get him to drop the charges and release the Negroes. This the Sheriff refused to do.

After the Negroes were jailed, they were questioned and their testimony which was recorded on tape verified the fact that racial integration was practiced on the project. It was then decided that a mass meeting should be called and the tape played so that the people might know of the activities taking place in their community.

Following the playing of the tape a resolution was offered requesting A. E. Cox and Dr. Minter to leave Holmes County for the good of all concerned. All but a few of the 500 to 700 people voted in favor of this resolution.

Mrs. Smith and her husband were in the audience, as were A. E. Cox and Dr. Minter. In the audience also was a Presbyterian minister, Marsh Calloway, who arose and challenged the meeting. "What legal or moral right do you have for such a meeting as this?" he asked. He was loudly booed and sat down. Calloway revealed the fact that he had known

Dr. Minter for 29 years. The attitude of this minister in his defense of Cox and Minter was such that his congregation of the Presbyterian Church at Durant released him from this charge immediately.

Calloway came to Durant from Arkansas, as did the parents of the girl involved in the incident.

Mrs. Smith undertook the defense of Cox, Minter and Calloway, through the columns of her papers and attacked the citizens of Holmes County and the people of the town of Lexington, who fought against racial integration. She wrote such bitter and slanted articles that soon reporters from Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and elsewhere began coming to Lexington and writing ugly articles to further incite local trouble and to give the state bad publicity.

Up until 1955, it had been the custom of the Negro Saints Industrial School and College, of which Dr. Arenia Mallory was president, to celebrate May Day with a parade on the streets of Lexington. But shortly before this date an announcement through the press had stated that at the annual Negro Leadership Council to be held in the Delta, there would be a panel discussion on "The Place of the Negro in Integrated Society", and that Arenia Mallory would conduct the panel. This announcement brought more emphasis on existing racial situations.

In view of the tense feelings growing out of the previous year of integration activities, the Mayor and Board of Commissioners were fearful that some incident might touch off serious trouble, and as a precautionary measure, it was decided to pass an ordinance prohibiting parades on the square.

When Mrs. Smith heard of this, she immediately put in a call for Negro Arenia Mallory who was in New York City at that time. Her papers came out with big headlines PARADES OUTLAWED IN LEXINGTON. The gist of the article was that the action was foolish and stated that she had failed to reach Dr. Mallory for comment.

The November, 1957 issue of "Ebony", a Negro magazine carried Mrs. Smith's picture over this by-line "Hazel Brannon Smith edits two crusading newspapers -- which have been called the conscience of Holmes County."

Sometime later, a Methodist minister was invited to hold a revival in Durant, and word leaked out that he had taken a stand for racial integration and his invitation was withdrawn. Again Mrs. Smith entered the issue and defended him through the columns of her papers.

On March 28, 1961, Mrs. Smith took an active part in an interracial meeting which took place in St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Capitol Street in Jackson. Other participants in this meeting were Mrs. Wallis I. Schutt of the Civil Rights Commission, nine Negro students

from Tougaloo Negro College, who took part in the "Sit-Ins", seven Negro students from Jackson State College. Others present were William Higgs, a Negro whose name is Turner, Edd Ezell, Edward Harrison, pastor of St. Andrews, Power Hearn, and a Rabbi, name not known.

Mrs. Wallis Schutt, who is a member of the Civil Rights Commission, came to Jackson from Washington, D. C. some twenty years ago. Many believe she is a "plant". She has been a regional director of the Girl Scouts, works with The Little Red Schoolhouse, is president of the United Church Women, and with the Negro sit-in groups. At the Episcopal Church meeting, she made the statement that she was considering entering Tougaloo Negro College to further her education.

On Friday night, December 15, 1961, Hazel Brannon Smith participated in an integrated meeting at 1072 West Lynch Street in Jackson, in which other participants were Negro Medgar Evers, Mississippi Field Secretary for NAACP, William Higgs, Robert L. T. Smith, Negro, three unidentified Negro men and Walter Dyer Smith, husband of Hazel Brannon Smith.

Mrs. Smith has seized every opportunity to use the columns of her papers to publish scathing editorials attacking organizations and individuals who have striven to maintain segregation of the races.

A. E. Cox, who has worked in Mississippi in connection with the Sherwood Eddy group is now living at Whitehaven, Tennessee and travels over Mississippi and several other states. He was with the National Council of Churches, for several years, and is now traveling over the South promoting the Rural Area Development program of the Kennedy Administration.

He was seen at the trial of Ellett Dogan in Federal Court at Oxford, December 21, 1961, when two busloads of Negro students from Rust College took over the courtroom.

On February 9, 1962, Cox was interviewed in the New Capitol in Jackson. When asked about his present activities, he stated that he was working with the Delta Foundation in conjunction with RAD. When asked if he were an employee of the government receiving a government salary, he said no. He stated that he traveled over several states and sought out areas which had been stricken by mechanical farming, throwing many farm laborers out of work.

He stated that he visited with preachers and sold them on the idea that it was their Christian duty to talk for and to sponsor projects good for those who have been thrown out of employment, and that he told them about what had been done in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas. He said he tried to show preachers that "Smoke-stacks and Church-steeple are closely related, and that where the economy runs down the Church would

surely follow."

When questioned about the National Council of Churches, he said he was an employee from 1956 to 1960, but was no longer with that organization, although he was still closely aligned, and attended their meetings in the south and southwest. Asked why he attended if no longer employed, he stated "To contact preachers and to learn their local problems and advise them how they and their community can benefit by RAD", said he did not work for but with the NCC, trying to better living conditions of mankind.

After stating that he was not on a government salary, and was not an employee of the NCC, he was asked where he got his traveling expenses. His reply was, "The Delta Foundation." Asked where the Delta Foundation got its funds he stated "from various sources, churches and civic clubs, but refused to name any of them. He stated that he had no other source of income.

When questioned as to who comprised the Delta Foundation, Cox stated that it was a non-profit corporation of which he was president, his wife a director, and that Dr. and Mrs. David Minter were directors. This foursome, he said, held all the offices in the Delta Foundation, which had received no donations recently but were operating on profits made on a previous sale of a tract of land purchased in Bolivar County for \$17,000 and sold for \$35,000. He stated that they took \$20,000 and had the YMCA Secretary Earl Brandenburg of New York to invest it for them in 1942, and that the investment had brought them more than \$40,000 in dividends since that time.

Cox stated that the Delta Foundation still owned 1600 acres in Holmes County and that he personally owned 143 acres adjoining and that Dr. Minter owned 280 acres, but that after the salary of the Negro who ran the farm, and his wife who runs the store was paid and the taxes taken care of, there was no profit left.

The Negro woman Fannie Booker who runs the store on Providence Plantation is said to be Cox's secretary and has been his dancing partner too, citizens of that community have reported. It is also reported that she makes trips to St. Louis twice each year for some unknown purpose.

Cox was reminded that the \$40,000 dividend on investments over a period of twenty years would amount to only \$2,000 per year, which could not possibly cover expenses incident to his extensive traveling, living expenses, clothing and taxes. He then admitted that he did have other income but would not reveal its source. When pushed for this information he suddenly decided he was in a great hurry and had to leave, but said he would write and give this information a little later. To date, May 3rd, 1962, this information has not been received.

He apparently is being financed by some source he fears to reveal, and seems to fear an investigation of his activities. He stated that he felt he was being persecuted by some people who called him a communist, and added, "Maybe there are things I believe which are the same as the communists believe, but that does not mean that I am a communist."

Cox inquired about James Meredith's chances of entering Ole Miss and was told that his chances, in the opinion of the interviewer, were slimmer than they had been in the past twenty years. He admitted that he didn't doubt it, but said that knowing some of the professors at Ole Miss as he did that he felt that if Meredith had made application in 1954 immediately after the Supreme Court Decision entrance would have been easily accomplished since these professors would have recognized the decision as the law of the land. He added that a few years ago a lot of people would express themselves for or against integration, but that now Mississippi had perhaps 100,000 people organized to fight the Supreme Court Decision.

Cox stated that he thought the Clyde Kinard conviction for stealing chicken feed was a terrible miscarriage of justice.

He admits that he is an integrationist, and that he feels the Negro is abused and denied his civil rights. He stated that integration is coming and the best the South can do is to prepare the Negro intellectually and socially to take his place in the white man's society. He intimated that the time was very near, and it is the opinion of his interviewer that Cox would go to extreme ends to bring it about when he feels that the time is right.

Cox and Minter have recently been negotiating for a tract of land in Leflore County adjacent to the Itta Bena Vocational College for Negroes. Minter at present is living in Arizona.

The activities of A. E. Cox take him regularly to Mt. Beulah Negro College near Edwards. People who live in that area have expressed themselves as being skeptical of the activities at Mt. Beulah.

Officials have stated that school buses are frequently seen after midnight delivering Negroes in various parts of the county, and they have made numerous inquiries about the nature of these meetings but have had little enlightenment.

Mt. Beulah was visited recently in an effort to ascertain the nature of its operation. A Negro minister, an employee by the name of Walker was asked about Cox. He said he knew him but insisted that Cox had no connection with Mt. Beulah.

Aaron Barker, a white minister, was interviewed. He stated

that he knew Cox but insisted that he had no connection with Mt. Beulah, that he came there to visit his friends, the Hendersons. (These are the same Hendersons who formerly lived on Providence Plantation, coming there from Arkansas.)

Barker was asked if he knew about the trouble on Providence Plantation. He said he had heard of it and that he thought Cox and Minter were treated very badly in Holmes County, and that he thought Cox was a fine person. He stated that integration was definitely unavoidable, and approaching, and that he had no objection to integration as he felt that God made no distinction between the races.

Barker was asked what church Cox belonged to. He pretended not to know, but said he thought Presbyterian. He was then asked if it were not a fact that Cox attended the Christian Church in Vicksburg when Barker was pastor there. He admitted that he did. Asked if he had ever discussed integration with Cox, Barker replied that he had not. He admitted that Cox visited Mt. Beulah regularly every 60 to 90 days.

The interviewer was told by an official in Edwards that Cox wrote checks on Mt. Beulah Institute. This official reported that he had numerous inquiries for directions to Mt. Beulah from strangers most of whom were white and who spoke with a brogue. He stated that meetings were held there every Tuesday and Friday nights which lasted until almost daylight. He said the people in that area were suspicious about what goes on out there and felt that no good purpose was served.

The officer said that Mt. Beulah was consolidated with Tougaloo College and supported by the Congregational Church which does not conform with Christian beliefs.

The fact that Cox made deposits and wrote checks on the Mt. Beulah project was verified by authorities in Edwards and at the Bank of Edwards.

After obtaining proof that Cox was definitely transacting business for Mt. Beulah the interviewer went back to Barker who had emphatically stated that Cox had no connection with Mr. Beulah. Barker was asked how Cox got the authority to make deposits and draw checks on Mt. Beulah, and was told that probably Mary Dale, who is in charge of their Agricultural Executive Department of their Home Missions in Indianapolis, Indiana, must have done it.

Barker finally stated that Cox, he believed, but did not seem to be sure, served in his place last summer while he was on vacation. (A bad memory?) He was asked if it were not unusual for Cox; a Presbyterian, to be appointed to direct a Christian Church institution. Barker then stated that it was probably due to the fact that Cox was with the National Council of Churches.

It has been found that Cox and Barker both attended and finished at Texas Christian University at Ft. Worth, Texas, and that Cox is not a Presbyterian, but a member of the Christian Church.

Barker stated that the school is now giving not more than 50 Negro youths special training for college entrance. (Are they being trained to integrate white colleges?) He said that it was better to train Negroes to assume responsibilities as first class citizens than for them to assume these responsibilities without this training.

The interviewer remarked to Barker that he could not understand how a Christian could condone communism when it was completely God-less. Barker, with no denial of embracing Communism, stated that the Communist doctrine was founded on God and said that Communists in America do not think precisely as the Russian Communists do. He further stated that the Communist doctrine is derived from a Godly doctrine and is well intentioned.

It is our belief that several of the people mentioned herein should be brought before the Legislative Investigative Committee and questioned about their activities.